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○ VOLUME 1 | ○ ISSUE 12 | ○ YEAR 2007

Bayonet Forward!

CHRISTMAS IN AFGHANISTAN!



LTC (P) Swartz and CSM Luce stand in front of the Chamberlain TOC.

To the Families of the 240th Engineer Group – Happy New Year 2007 from Afghanistan! Once again the Holidays have come and gone, and they are now memories. For many of us Christmas always seems far away, up until the moment we realize it is right around the corner and we haven't finished shopping yet! In that same way the return from our deployment always seems far away, until now as we put up a new calendar that reads '2007' we see that it's not distant after all. You can be proud of your Soldiers who are making sure that everything will be ready when our redeployment date arrives. This includes accomplishing our missions, taking care of our Soldiers, accounting for our equipment, and setting the conditions for success of the unit that will replace us.

But most importantly it means not losing focus, and your Soldiers are working hard to make sure that doesn't happen. Thank you for your sacrifice and support during this deployment and especially during the Christmas holiday season. I know that this was a tough time



Soldier's of the 240th Engineer Group stand on the front steps of the brigade headquarters holding stockings received from the Family Support Program back in Maine.

of year for many of you, but you have made it through and can now work with us as we urge all of our Soldiers to stay focused all the way to the finish line.

*LTC(P) Les Swartz
CTF Chamberlain
Commanding*





SGT Hayden's Christmas tree with presents.

The last month has been filled with both excitement and accomplishment. Our unit has successfully relocated the Headquarters to beautiful FOB (Forward Operating Base) Sharana while never missing a beat in conducting current operations. The task of packing, repacking and moving a brigade size headquarters while at the same time continuing to function as a command and control element for Soldiers in the field was daunting at a minimum.



Ssg Judkins and something you only see in the "county", a 5 ton loaded with a connex, pulling a trailer with a pickup on it, with a John Deer Gator in the bed of the truck.

The Soldiers of this unit overcame the challenge by utilizing teamwork, cooperation, intestinal fortitude, "Yankee" ingenuity and most importantly, a sense of humor. We absorbed the bumps in the road and made the mission a success.



A bus loaded with people and Automobiles not something you see every day in Maine.

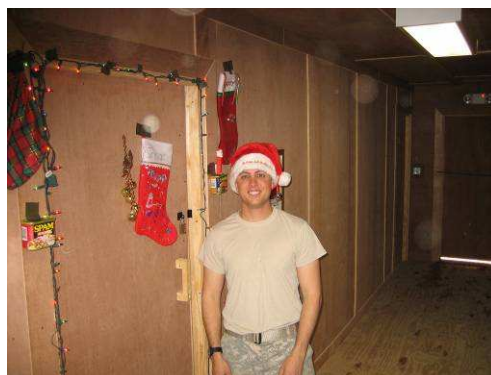
CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM HHC 240TH COMMANDER

The completion of the mission was made especially important considering the weight a pending Holiday Season played on our morale.



Bayonet Admin, Mail and Brigade S-1Det 1 Office door decorated for the season. Talk about multi-tasking

That being said, the packages sent from individuals, organizations and our incredible Family Support Group really lifted our spirits. Personally, the highlight of Christmas here in our new home, was watching LTC (P) Swartz, our Task Force Commander, greet the last Convoy of our move with a Santa hat and a hearty smile. This type of spirit, in the face of missing our own homes at a very special time of year, inspired many in the company to dig out the Holiday cheer we carried in our hearts from Christmas' past.



SGT Burnham sporting the "Bah Humbug" Santa hat in front of the operations office.

In short, the Christmas Spirit was very much alive in Sharana, and though we couldn't celebrate with our own families we were able to commemorate the occasion with our NEW family.

Christmas '06 will not be forgotten anytime soon by any of the Soldiers of HHC 240th. In fact, the building of bonds within the unit through shared experience is just what we need to keep the unit going as strong in the last part of the tour here in lovely Afghanistan as we have throughout. The support we have drawn from home has kept us going when times were tough. Many have felt the warm kindness of you back in Maine in our souls, even when the cold lonely winds of Afghanistan have chilled our skins.



Christmas Stockings for each soldier from back at home

Speaking for the unit, I would like to offer all those who have kept us in their thoughts and prayers this Holiday Season a most appreciative "thank you." As the page of a new year is turned and I look forward to being home in 2007, I will also not forget the events of 2006 which played such a major part in welding together as fine a unit as I've ever encountered. As the Soldiers in this unit continue to accomplish any task at any time under almost any circumstance, the units around us recognize we keep our colors high, our muskets clean and point our "Bayonets Forward!"

*Article by CPT Jarrod Crockett
HHC 240th Engineer Group
Company Commander*

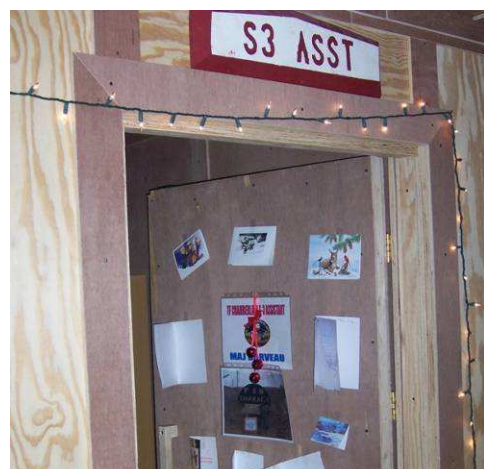


S3 Section December Report



MAJ Darveau holds a Christmas tree wearing a Santa hat with the snow covered lands of Afghanistan behind.

Season's Greetings from Sharana! The majority of the section arrived at our new Tactical Operations Center (TOC) in Sharana before Christmas. The new buildings that the Korean Engineers and Task Force Eagle soldiers built are very nice. A lot of us are living out of our offices for now until construction on our billets is complete, but that is OK as it is a short walk to work.



MAJ Darveau's office door decorated with cards and pictures.

FOB Sharana is quite different from Bagram Air Force Base. It is a nice change though, quieter as less aircraft fly in and less people live here. It is quite dark at night, but the stars are spectacular!



One of the views from FOB Sharana

Although we had to be away from friends and family for Christmas, I think at both BAF and Sharana the Chamberlain Team

pulled together as our family and had a pretty good time. We received all the stockings that you great family members put together and handed them out on Christmas Morning.



Soldiers received their stockings from "home" on Christmas morning.

Church services were also good with services both during the day and at night. Traditions can happen no matter where you are in the world. Singing "Silent Night" by candlelight happened in the Davis Chapel here on FOB Sharana, Afghanistan as it does on Christmas Eve at your hometown church in Maine.



The Chapel at Christmas, after one of the services was a warm reminder of home.

The shopping was definitely different this year, but thanks to the Internet and the bazaars, I think we made out just fine.



Christmas tree located in the Chapel.

Although our team is now separated between two locations, I think the move has brought us a little closer together. At the end of the day in Sharana we take a little down time together as a TOC to watch our new favorite show "My Name is Earl". It is great for a few laughs to take the edge off after a busy day.



Graphics from the now favorite show in the TOC.

As we begin 2007, we look forward to this being a great year as it is the year we finish our tour here in Afghanistan and return home to the great State of Maine! We are on the downhill slope as missions continue and we plan to receive our replacements. We are staying focused on the goal which is to have great success here making a difference to the Afghan people by the missions we conduct. Our ultimate goal however is to return home safely to all of you and we are well on our way. "Bayonet Forward!"



View of the flags on FOB Sharana.

*Article written by MAJ Darveau
Chamberlain 3 A
AKA - "Gunner"*





ILT Cheever captures the Christmas Spirit in our new Tactical Operations Center.

The Construction Management section has officially moved to Sharana permanently. Since our arrival it has been pretty hectic with getting everything up and running. We started our first few days of work with assembling desks for the office. After the desks were assembled, we then got our computers and printers up and running so that we could function as a Brigade Construction Management Section again. We are still undergoing many changes to orient ourselves to correctly take on the proper role of quality assurance and quality control for the FOB projects.



Our new home at FOB Sharana. We share this space with the S4, BMO and S6 Sections. The sun warms this porch all day !

We bade goodbye to SFC Romano, and started missing his scrounging immediately. He had to head back to Bagram to backfill MSG Smith who went home on R&R. SFC Romano did an outstanding job, and was able to juggle the troop labor from all three components of the Army, as well as our Korean Coalition Partners. An important partner in getting work done is the contracted services of Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR). They installed the lights and heating equipment, and keep it maintained.

The Koreans are still working to complete our billeting buildings, which has not been an easy road with the Sharana weather.

Construction Management Section December News

The Sharana weather is very similar to Maine with its changes by the minute, which then causes the construction of the billeting to be slowed down to ensure safety of the project is maintained. All and all the weather hasn't been able to stop the Koreans from continuing to plug away day by day doing a fantastic job to complete the buildings as soon as possible.



The Korean Army Engineers at work on a large K-span on Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan

With the majority of the CMS Section moved to Sharana, the small CMS Team at Bagram is busy ensuring that there is no lapse in support and oversight of the Coalition construction projects.



Sergeant First Class Romano on his way back to Bagram



CSM Luce and LTC (P) Swartz uncase the Colors at our new Headquarters.. SSG Polky and SSG Shannon are the Color Guard

The Polish Engineers just finished a critical force protection project, and the Koreans are heavily engaged in a high profile and time sensitive K-Span (the metal arch building-shown to the left) project. When completed, the K-Span will be one of the largest of its kind in Afghanistan.



Sharana Sunset approaching the Winter Solstice. A Guard tower and one of our unfinished buildings frame the scene.

In addition to the Coalition construction projects, in Bagram, the CMS Team has spent a lot of its time doubling as professional movers. Between moving various soldiers into reconfigured B-Huts, reconfiguring and moving offices, and setting up the Engineer Brigade Construction Storage Facility, everyone has had plenty of experience moving. With unfurling of our colors in Sharana, the arrival of the New Year, and the slow lengthening of daylight, we are encouraged to know that the time away from home is now counted in weeks instead of months.

*Prepared by:
LTC Greg Leimbach,
SFC Matthew Walker, SPC Richard Damren*

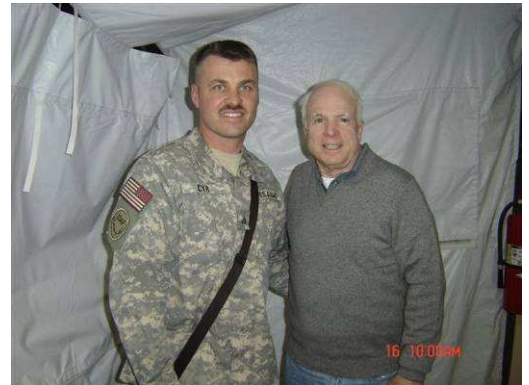


Views of FOB Salerno



Senator Susan Collins from Maine, and Senator John McCain from Arizona recently visited Forward Operating Base Salerno. While in Salerno the senators had took the opportunity to spend time getting to know some of the soldiers.

The two senators expressed their appreciation for the work being accomplished by the coalition of soldiers to make Afghanistan a better place. The soldiers from Combined Task Force Chamberlain presented the Senators with the CTF Chamberlain coin of excellence as well as a lapel pin.



Christmas day in Salerno was a day of giving and receiving of gifts. Below 1LT Davis, LTC Duehring, and SGT Cyr are pictured with some of the Christmas gifts.

Pictures submitted by SGT Cyr





SGT Grace, Chaplain Gibson, Commander Hopkins, LTC Corbett, and MAJ Vonderheide are watched by CSM Luce as they sing Christmas carols in the TOC.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:25-33

As we get closer to the day when we will be reunited with our families and as you prepare



CH (LTC) Gibson passes out stockings to soldiers of Task Force Eagle at a Pre-Christmas formation.

Religious Support Team

to be reunited with your soldiers, it is natural to have anxiety. The irony is that we have all coped with being away from each other and to this strange environment, each in our own way, and now we are close to the end. It is right now that anxiety could very well be at its peak! Now is the time when soldiers and families alike come to realize that they have not met all the goals they had set out a year ago. "I'm going to lose 20 pounds", "I'm going to paint that extra room," "I'm going to read the bible every day", "I will right a letter each week." These are all examples of things that we might have planned for our time away or our time at home while the soldier was away. It is also now that we realize that we have not met those plans.



CPT Kirkpatrick leads the Hanukuk service at the chapel

RELAX! It is normal to feel this way! The anticipation of the end and all its anxiety is normal; but, it is not always helpful. For our soldiers, it can lead to nervous mistakes and attention to the wrong details while ignoring the important ones. For our families, it can cause you to become impatient with other family and friends, our children and the soldiers themselves. Don't put too many expectations on the reunion time and you won't have as many disappointments and as much anxiety. Trust in yourselves, your love for each other, and especially, God's Love for you!

Well, the Religious Support Team has been in Sharana since the weekend just after Thanksgiving. We have settled in well and we are working well with the Chaplain who was already here. We have a vibrant Religious Schedule with at least three services each weekend, two bible studies each week and various other events. During Hanukkah, we were privileged to have a Jewish Lay Leader on our Post who led services each night. Over the Christmas Holiday, we held six services,

went caroling around the FOB, held a door decorating contest, and provided a Christmas party for the soldiers (though some of us older folk were not cool enough to enjoy the music!)



SGT Grace passes out stockings to the Task Force Eagle soldiers at Christmas time.

We are adjusting well to being down here, and out soldiers back at BAF are adjusting to us not being around (many of them are quite happy, in fact!) We all are looking forward to being home and successfully completing our mission.

God Bless You,

Article written by: CH Andy Gibson



Anyone desiring to submit information for the newsletter can send it by e-mail to:

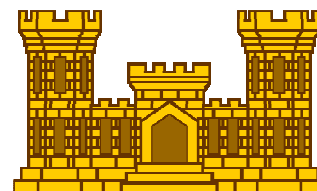
Nathaniel.Grace@us.army.mil

Further pictures can be found at the 240th Engineer Group's website:

http://www.me.ngb.army.mil/Family/Family_Pages/240th/default.htm

Mailing Address for all 240th Soldiers:

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**Bayonet!
Forward!**